



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SOCIAL WORK OF THE NEW YORK SCHOOLS¹

JOHN MARTIN

Member Board of Education, New York City

WITH all modesty it may be asserted that New York city continues to lead the continent, and probably the world, in the social use of the buildings, grounds, and staff of the school system. So extensive are the activities of the board of education outside of purely educational work, so generous is the expenditure on recreation, music, dancing, concerts, lectures and the like, that few citizens, even in New York itself, realize what a wide and well-managed social work is conducted regularly in the school buildings at public expense. Not infrequently, when some smaller city imitates one or two of New York's multiform and well-established school activities,—recreation centers, evening lectures for adults, mixed dances or the like—the experiment is proclaimed throughout the land as a brand-new, daringly original feat, a signal discovery of a socialist mayor or of a wonderfully efficient commission government.

In the winter season just closed the recreation centers of Greater New York have been attended nightly, six times a week, from October to May, by over 17,500 people. Some 650 clubs—athletic, literary, social, musical, civic, dramatic, dancing and parental—each with its regular organization, have found in these centers a comfortable home, teachers to advise and help, and facilities of all sorts. Boys and girls have played parlor games, practised gymnastics under trained instructors, and competed for basket-ball trophies. Those of a more intellectual turn have attended literary clubs, where readings, recitations, essays and debates on current topics have filled the evening.

¹Expanded from remarks made in discussion at the meeting of The Academy of Political Science, April 18, 1912. Reprinted by permission from *The Survey* of May 18th, 1912.

Forty-one centers included classes in vocal and instrumental music in which forty or fifty youths and maidens, under the guidance of a competent pianist, have sung such old and popular airs as "Way Down Upon the Suwanee River" and "The Star-spangled Banner." Often, to vary the proceedings, some budding Caruso or Sembrich would come forward with characteristic musicianly diffidence to warble a solo. On other evenings a cornet or a violin in skilled hands would make the rafters ring. A few years of such training will doubtless make the citizens of New York as musical as those of any German city and will open new avenues of enjoyment to thousands.

While social workers have been lamenting the vicious influence of dancing halls, the board of education has deprived these resorts of many prospective customers by conducting, at fifteen centers, mixed dancing classes under proper chaperonage. The board furnished piano music and often the clubs themselves added to the gaiety by bringing cornets and violins. Good music with jolly and modest dances was encouraged. Little effort was necessary to bar the grizzly bear, the turkey trot and other indecencies which have invaded high society.

Boy Scouts have held regular meetings for drill and organization under the patronage of the board of education, to which no scheme for the physical or moral uplift of youngsters or their parents seems to come amiss. Still looking for new ways to be of service, the board recently granted the use of a school building to a special committee which has undertaken to organize neighborhood activities and to correlate the lectures, the people's forums, the musical evenings, the clubs and the classes. It expects to demonstrate how neighbors of all ages and tastes may be accommodated in the school building to still further advantage.

Under the will of the late Joseph Pulitzer money was left to supply concerts of the highest quality, free of charge, to the masses. The board of education gladly coöperated by granting the use of the assembly halls and organs in the high schools. Consequently a series of orchestral and vocal performances, not unfit to be classed with the Philharmonic concerts, has been given in many sections of the city to very large audiences.

Even the moving-picture theaters have not gone unchallenged. In coöperation with a committee of the People's Institute, a series of educational moving-picture exhibitions was shown to great crowds of spectators. Though the somewhat overzealous interference of the fire department, which objected to the form of protection provided for the lanterns, stopped this work temporarily, no doubt it will be resumed. After a trial of Sunday evening concerts and lectures under the management of a voluntary committee, the free use of some high-school assembly halls was recently granted for two series of meetings, which promise to be as useful to the non-church-goers as the gatherings which have made Cooper Union famous. A new departure has been made by allowing a collection to be taken toward defraying expenses. This clears the audience of the sense of being pauperized, and, by reducing the cost of the performances, renders extension of the work more easy.

Apart from the recreation centers the public lecture system continues to flourish. About a million adults have attended the illustrated lectures in science, civics, history, travel, music, art and literature. All were given by competent lecturers, who were bound to hold their audiences by the interest and force of their remarks, since, unlike college students, the listeners were free to show their displeasure with poor work by quietly withdrawing or by staying away.

Funds have been provided for continuing, though not for enlarging, during the coming summer, the social activities in the vacation, evening, roof and open-air playgrounds for children and mothers and babies, which last year were conspicuously successful and extensive. In 1911 no fewer than 832 teachers were employed in aiding 125,500 daily visitors at these various play centers to amuse themselves rationally and healthfully—a regiment of school soldiers of the common good which no other city could duplicate. Swings, seesaws, and other apparatus were so vigorously used that it is doubtful whether they will last through another season. Mothers and babies sought the quiet and shade of their special playgrounds. On the roof playgrounds bands of musicians played for promenaders and girl dancers. Gymnasts, baseball and basket-ball players and

folk dancers practised for tournaments or simply played for the fun of playing. Nobody can measure the good which the 248 playgrounds did for the hundreds of thousands who made up the aggregate attendance of 5,955,160.

Altogether, the tale of the social uses of the New York schools is encouraging and creditable. Much remains to be done, which the board of education is eager to do as soon as the keepers of Father Knickerbocker's purse will permit; but enough has been accomplished to prove the beneficence and wisdom of utilizing to the full the buildings, the organization and the teaching skill of the school system for social enjoyment and elevation.